



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Scotland's Global Affairs Framework

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Scotland's international contribution

The COVID-19 pandemic and the climate and biodiversity emergencies prove in the starkest possible way that we live in an interconnected world. For any government the global and regional context inevitably impacts the achievement of domestic objectives. That is why it is imperative that Scotland becomes more active internationally.

Our vision is for Scotland to be a thriving, inclusive and entrepreneurial country, delivering a just transition to a net zero, nature-positive, wellbeing economy. We are also determined that Scotland should be a good global citizen, making a constructive contribution to addressing global challenges.

This Global Affairs Framework sets out the values and principles underpinning the Scottish Government's international work and the basis on which the Scottish Government will prioritise its international activity. It is being published at a time when, in the face of the invasion of Ukraine, nations are being tested on whether they support not just the principle, but the reality of adopting a rules-based approach, to protect their values.

The principles of this Global Affairs Framework will apply regardless of Scotland's constitutional position but clearly the contribution that Scotland could make, and the benefits it could receive, would be significantly enhanced with the powers of independence rather than devolution.

The Scottish Government's prospectus for enhanced international relations as an independent state will be published in the run-up to the independence referendum.

The Scottish Government's domestic priorities are rooted in Scotland's National Outcomes and the National Performance Framework. These aim to give effect in Scotland to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). And through its international work, the Scottish Government aims to contribute to the achievement of those goals at both the national and global levels.

As we pursue our domestic objectives and address global challenges through our international work, we are able to draw on Scotland's global reputation, global connections and global outlook.

Through our international work, we can support the creation of good, green jobs, reduce child poverty, gender and other inequalities at home and overseas, and share Scotland's experience in policy-making, while learning ourselves from others. In this way we can make a contribution to the world that is welcomed and valued.

In the face of the UK Government's disastrous and chaotic Brexit, which was rejected by an overwhelming majority in Scotland, the Scottish Government will remain committed to the European Union and its values, and to internationalism. We will continue to work with our fellow Europeans and friends beyond to deepen our ties, improve our global networks and unlock new economic and business opportunities. And we will continue to prioritise international development and climate justice as key parts of Scotland's global contribution within the international community, reflecting our core values of fairness and equality, and our recognition of the historical privileges we enjoy.

Approach

The Scottish Government's ambition for the role that Scotland can play internationally is built on a values-based approach, consistent with our focus on fairness and inclusion at home. Our approach starts with an internationalist outlook based on cooperation. It builds on our long history of constructive engagement.

The Scottish Government's international activity creates opportunities at home, broadens our horizons, attracts high-quality investment and ultimately benefits the people of Scotland. By being open, connected and making a positive contribution internationally, we give ourselves the greatest possible chance of building a successful country, able to recover from the setbacks of Brexit and COVID-19, and ensuring no one is left behind as we transition to a net zero economy.

The nature of international affairs means that governments need to be nimble and adapt to circumstances. That will characterise our approach. At the same time, our Global Affairs Framework has a consistent focus on:

- ▶ **good global citizenship**
 - ▶ **maintaining the closest possible relationship with the European Union**
 - ▶ **gender equality**
 - ▶ **climate crisis and climate justice**
 - ▶ **respect for human rights and the rule of law**
 - ▶ **the role of our international networks**
 - ▶ **Scotland's culture.**
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1. Good global citizenship

No matter what challenges may emerge, and irrespective of the behaviour of others, Scotland will always aim to be a good global citizen. This is fundamental to everything we do internationally.

Scotland acts on the international stage from a position of privilege. For centuries, Scots have made a significant contribution to the world we now know. But Scotland's legacy is not universally positive. We recognise, for example, our part in the historic injustices of the transatlantic slave trade and our contribution to global warming. The position we now enjoy results in part from that historical legacy. We are determined to acknowledge and learn from our past, including in the way our schools address Scotland's colonial history and through our approach to climate justice.

As a good global citizen, the Scottish Government commits to listen and act in response to the often unheard voices – especially those of women and young people, and from the Global South. Their perspectives will inform our own policies and encourage us to challenge others where appropriate in order to achieve fairer outcomes.

We will take opportunities to learn from the experience of others and to make distinctive contributions in addressing global challenges – sharing our knowledge, skills and technical expertise for global good. We will amplify marginalised voices on global issues such as migration, human rights, biodiversity and the climate crisis.

We will use the networks and platforms available to us to encourage greater action and more ambitious commitments from governments at all levels, particularly where success requires government at all levels to act.

Recognising the impact of COVID-19 and ongoing global health inequality, as good global citizens we will support measures to ensure vaccine equity.

We will also strive to ensure that Scotland's global environmental footprint is sustainable, playing our full role in tackling the global climate and nature crises.

We will aim for policy coherence in our decisions that affect development. For example, as outlined in our [Vision for Trade](#), we will continue to support Fair Trade to drive better trading conditions for marginalised producers and workers globally.

2. Maintaining the closest possible relationship with the European Union

Scotland is a nation with a strong European heritage, outlook and values. The fundamental values of the European Union (EU) – human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights – resonate in Scotland. Scotland recognises that the EU is more than a free trade area: it has much wider benefits, including support for peace and a strong social dimension, which Scotland supports and wants to be part of as an independent member state.

Like many European countries, Scotland's population has been shaped by migration. EU citizens have enriched communities in every local authority, and in recent decades free movement within the EU has helped reverse population decline in Scotland. European markets dominate our international trade. Indeed, for more than 45 years, individuals, businesses and communities across Scotland experienced the social, economic and cultural benefits of membership of the EU.

Ensuring the closest possible relationship with the EU is therefore a fundamental part of our international activity.

Scotland shares with the EU a [Strategic Agenda](#) and a vision that embodies democratic values, promotes the wellbeing of all of society, rises fully to the challenge of the global climate and biodiversity emergencies, and supports a smart and sustainable economic recovery from the global pandemic. [Steadfastly European: Scotland's past, present and future](#) reaffirms Scotland's commitment to work in partnership with the EU to realise our shared values and address global challenges.

We will continue to uphold the values we share with the EU, and to engage positively and proactively with the EU institutions, member states and other European organisations on Scotland's and the EU's policy priorities.

For example, we will engage on:

- ▶ **climate action, renewable technologies and protecting biodiversity**
- ▶ **supporting the development of green and digital jobs and skills**
- ▶ **standing up for individuals' freedoms and for democratic processes, keeping people safe, tackling poverty and inequality**
- ▶ **supporting young people.**

We also remain committed to the EU's Erasmus+ programme, recognising the importance of reciprocal education mobility, and are exploring ways to maximise Scotland's access to this scheme.

We believe that rejoining the EU at the earliest opportunity as an independent country represents the best future for Scotland. In the meantime, we will maintain alignment where possible and practical with EU legislation, standards, policies and programmes.

3. Gender equality

The Scottish Government is working to ensure that no one in Scotland is denied rights or opportunities because of their gender. We believe that our policies and actions abroad should be consistent with our focus on equality, inclusion and human rights at home.

Global crises and threats, such as disease, conflict and climate, create and exacerbate inequalities around the world. For example, COVID-19 has worsened gender inequality, as women and girls are more likely to provide the majority of care giving, while generally earning less and holding less secure jobs, which therefore impacts upon their economic independence.

Inequalities are felt most acutely by the marginalised. In particular, too often women are excluded from having their say in resolving and addressing the challenges which affect them and society. Our belief in the fundamental importance of universal human rights makes this unacceptable. Any nation which underuses the talent of half of its population or fails to uphold their rights impoverishes itself. Women's leadership is essential if global challenges are to be successfully addressed.

The Scottish Government's commitment to women and girls in our international engagement is already clear from our support for work which highlights the importance of women's participation in promoting peace in conflict affected areas, our funding of scholarships for women and girls in Pakistan, the recognition of gender equality in our [Vision for Trade](#), and the Scottish Government's leading role in the launch of the [Glasgow Women's Leadership Statement on Gender Equality and Climate Change](#).

But we need to go further. We will review Scottish Government policies and programmes where they have an international dimension to ensure that they reflect a feminist approach to foreign policy. And we will seek to learn from other countries in this area and from the experiences and expertise of the Global South.

Through strong partnerships between governments, universities, businesses and civil society we can enable more women and girls to lead on the solutions we need to address global challenges and promote gender equality.

Scotland will contribute to gender equality by taking a feminist approach and empowering women and girls. For example we will develop our Women and Girls' Empowerment Fund within our International Development Programme.

4. Climate crisis and climate justice

Tackling the climate crisis is the single biggest international challenge of our times. Scotland will play its full part in responding to the global emergency, by taking responsibility for and reducing our own emissions, as well as both addressing and adapting to the impacts which cannot now be avoided. In doing so we will ensure a just transition to a net zero and climate-resilient future.

Scotland is committed to leading by example, supporting an increase in international ambition and driving forward the vital work of this decisive decade to turn commitments into tangible action. In doing so, we will put values of good global citizenship, solidarity, fairness and inclusion at the centre of our approach to the global climate crisis.

We recognise that the climate crisis will not affect everyone equally, and that the poorest countries and communities require climate justice. In recognition of this we have committed to trebling our Climate Justice Fund to £36 million over this parliamentary term. We will target this fund to support marginalised people who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change in the communities in which we work, and ensure their voices are centred through our participatory approach. The Fund will continue to support programmes that build resilience to climate change, tackle structural inequalities and deliver positive outcomes against three pillars of climate justice – transformative, distributive and procedural justice.

In line with our commitment to climate justice, at COP26 we showed global leadership and our determination to acknowledge our share of the historic responsibility for the climate crisis by being the first government in the world to commit international funding for climate-induced loss and damage. We will work with like-minded governments, civil society and other stakeholders to build action and a long-term response to the consequences of the climate crisis that cannot now be tackled through adaptation or future mitigation.

As well as unequal impacts from climate change we recognise that not everyone has an equal voice and participation in global forums. We are committed to using our position to champion and raise the voices of women, young people and people from the Global South; and to take action so that their perspectives can play a decisive role in the development of local and national action, strategies and in global negotiations.

Scotland is a world leader in innovation, particularly in onshore and offshore wind. Through our updated [Climate Change Plan](#) we have set out an ambitious package of policies and proposals to continue reducing emissions across all sectors of the economy over the period to 2032.

As set out in our [Vision for Trade](#) and [Inward Investment Plan](#) we will ensure that trade and investment is used as a lever to progress towards our net zero targets, while developing Scotland's competitive advantage in areas with positive environmental and economic impact. To help deliver this Scotland's trade support will be provided to businesses who align with our climate priorities.

As an outward-looking country, we are committed to working in partnership with other governments, and using our networks to raise ambition and push for greater action. We will use our position as the European co-chair of the Under 2 Coalition, the largest global network of state and regional governments committed to reducing emissions in line with the Paris Agreement, to mobilise action from states, regions and devolved governments and to advance towards a just transition to net zero.

5. Respect for human rights and the rule of law

Scotland is an inclusive nation which respects, protects and fulfils internationally recognised human rights. With our legal tradition developed over centuries, we are a country with a long history of respect for the rule of law. This is important in ensuring Scotland is a fair and just nation and because everyone is entitled to basic rights and freedoms.

Our [Vision for Trade](#) recognises the need for Scotland's trade policy to directly address human rights. We will also continue to use our international engagement and dialogue as an opportunity to help increase respect for, and understanding of, human rights worldwide through sharing practical experience of a [human rights approach to policy-making and delivery](#).

Respect for human rights and the rule of law are fundamental to our engagement with all states, especially those with whom we have concerns over human rights or rule of law abuses. This means balancing economic development with social justice.

We welcome international scrutiny of our human rights record and we will always engage with the United Nations and other international human rights monitoring mechanisms.

We all have the right to live in a peaceful society. We cannot have situations where aggressors take illegal action without consequences to deter them from planning further aggression. Conflict drives inequality and poverty. Too often, those who have the least suffer the most when conflict occurs. The rule of law is fundamental to international peace and security. Peaceful relations between countries, groups and people lead to more prosperous relationships so we will increase our knowledge and experience to strengthen Scotland's peace offer.

The rule of law is essential for inclusive economic growth, sustainable development and to protect people's rights and fundamental freedoms. International agreements, once made, should be adhered to and should be equally enforced.

We will seek out opportunities to strengthen our international justice and law enforcement relationships in order to better combat criminality in Scotland and abroad. We will focus our international partnerships with countries where we can have the greatest impact on improving human rights, and on initiatives which support the realisation of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

We also believe in contributing to strong multilateral processes because they enable international collaboration through which we can better address international challenges and ensure our security. Our participation enables us to exchange ideas on shared priorities with others from across the globe. It also allows us to promote an ambitious agenda for sustainable development. And as our COVID-19 response in our partner countries Malawi, Zambia and Rwanda showed, by working in collaboration with international organisations we can share expertise with, and deliver crucial support to others across the globe.

Multilateral organisations provide the frameworks to promote and protect human rights, democracy, security and the rule of law globally. We will continue supporting efforts to ensure appropriate representation and diversity of input, including by the Global South and civil society, for an international system that works for all.

6. The role of our international network

Scotland embraces opportunities to strengthen our international relationships. Our network of overseas offices is vital to promoting Scotland's international profile, and protecting and enhancing Scotland's interests in the EU and beyond. We will continue to invest in international relationships, enhance our communications activity, and unlock new economic and trading opportunities.

Scotland's overseas network comprises (as at May 2022) Scottish Government Offices in Beijing, Berlin, Brussels, Dublin, London, Ottawa, Paris and Washington DC, and more than 30 Scottish Development International trade and investment offices in around 20 countries.

The Scottish Government is committed to further strengthening Scotland's international relationships, presence and voice. We will strengthen our office in Brussels and establish new Scottish Government offices in Copenhagen in 2022 and Warsaw within the lifetime of this parliament.

We have a strong focus on our nearest neighbours in Europe and North America, including the [Arctic](#). Through our network we will contribute to Scotland's recovery from COVID-19, to reducing child poverty and to transforming Scotland's economy by promoting Scotland's economic interests and fostering educational, research, cultural and policy exchange.

We will also build our links with China, Japan, India and Pakistan, and explore new opportunities in Asia as part of a broader review of Scotland's global reach and presence. This will include an increased focus in the Global South, including across Africa, Asia and South America, as we strengthen our relationships with emerging markets and developing countries.

We will use our growing International Development Fund and enhanced Climate Justice Fund to work with partners in the Global South. And we will develop a new Scottish International Education Strategy to promote Scotland's excellent higher education offer globally and support Scotland as a study destination for international students.

The work of all of the offices includes promoting and securing research and innovation capability, partnerships and funding. This contributes to collaborative work which seeks fair solutions to global challenges, including a just transition to net zero and tackling inequality.

Our international offices will promote cooperation in areas of devolved responsibility at the national and sub-national level. Through them we will agree memorandums of understanding and other instruments where these are necessary or helpful in advancing cooperation.

By developing relationships with international media and making effective use of social media channels we will raise awareness of Scotland's strengths and opportunities and promote Scotland's reputation.

But Scotland's international network extends much further. A wide range of partners support our efforts across trade, investment and people-to-people links. They include:

- ▶ a growing network of [GlobalScots](#)
- ▶ country, regional and sector-specific [trade envoys](#)
- ▶ public and private sector bodies, such as **Creative Scotland, Universities Scotland or the Royal Botanical Garden Edinburgh, with their own international connections.**

By continuing to engage with the Scottish diaspora around the world – not just those with a heritage link to Scotland but those who work or study internationally, alumni from our institutions and others with an affinity to Scotland – we will support and expand this global community. These connections raise our profile and reputation. They encourage individuals and companies to visit, study, live, work and invest in Scotland.

7. Scotland's culture

Scotland benefits from a strong global identity. Fundamental to this is our diverse culture, which is inspired and celebrated by people around the world. Our cultural festivals are world-renowned.

Culture is a powerful tool for building bridges between people and reinforcing mutual understanding. It can also be an engine for economic and social development. In Scotland's case, our distinctive culture contributes to Scotland's positive international reputation as an open, creative, welcoming and confident nation.

We will build on Scotland's strong international cultural offer through a cultural diplomacy strategy. This strategy will set out how we will assist the recovery of the cultural sector from the pandemic through international engagement, and how we will use the opportunities cultural exchanges create in support of Scotland's broader international objectives. By supporting and promoting Scotland's international cultural connections we can help ensure the cultural sector has the platform it deserves.

Key to this will be international mobility. International activities such as touring are vital to maintaining international networks and relationships, and to fostering the exchanges on which cultural innovation thrives. We are already taking forward work to support touring artists and other creative professionals working internationally to overcome the challenges of COVID-19 and the consequences of the UK Government's disastrous approach to Brexit. This work will further support the development of our cultural diplomacy strategy.

Culture is one of Scotland's greatest exports and is critical to how we are viewed internationally, including representing a more accurate portrayal of Scotland's colonial and slavery history. Our great cultural assets can support our wider international connections, including strengthening trading relationships with other countries.

We will work with Scotland's creative businesses to help them recover and adapt to new ways of working. We will increase support for our screen industry to work internationally, strengthening networks and building recognition of our stories, our artists and our creativity, including our film, television and gaming sectors.

Cultural collaboration and exchange builds trust, and strengthens both our understanding of other nations and, in turn, their understanding of what Scotland has to offer. It also fosters the cross-border cultural partnerships and networks that are vital to the sector's operation. We will work with the sector to continue to nurture strong relationships and collaborations with key partners in Europe and beyond. This includes working with stakeholders to encourage international cultural exchange, capacity-building and collaboration.

In delivering Scotland's [Culture Strategy](#) we will continue to enhance Scotland's international profile, reputation and attractiveness as a tourist destination by promoting our world-leading festivals to international tourists and arts markets, through international touring and festival appearances by the National Performing Companies and through international loans by and from Scotland's National Collections. In light of COVID-19 and to help fulfil the legacy of COP26, we will explore digital and hybrid opportunities too. We will also continue to support the development of skills, facilities and opportunities for Scotland's screen sector which will underpin inward investment, as well as the sector's sustainable growth.

Scotland is respected as a country with a long history of cultural collaboration. Our winter festivals – St Andrew's Day, Hogmanay and Burns Night – are celebrated by the Scottish diaspora across the world. Our culture is enriched by people from across the world who choose to live, work, study or visit Scotland, and by our increasingly culturally diverse communities. Scotland welcomes international cultural influences and the riches they bring and it is important these international ties are nurtured and valued for the way they connect Scotland to the wider world and foster mutual understanding.

Next steps

This Global Affairs Framework sets out the values and principles underpinning the Scottish Government's international work and the basis on which the Scottish Government will prioritise its international activity.

Our international work seeks to mirror our domestic priorities and values, whether by empowering women and girls through our international development efforts, connecting a global community of people with an affinity to Scotland who will help to raise the country's international reputation or contributing to the international body of expertise in how to address child poverty.

Whilst we have established programmes and initiatives in these and many other areas, the contribution that Scotland could make, and the benefits it could receive, would be significantly enhanced with the powers of independence rather than devolution.

The Scottish Government's prospectus for enhanced international relations as an independent state will be published in the run-up to the independence referendum.



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